DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 735 TM 832 025

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TITLE A Descriptive Review Process for Growth in Teaching.
PUB DATE [83]
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Observation Techniques; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Inservice Teacher Education; *Observation; *Personality; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Evaluation; Teacher Improvement; *Teaching Styles
IDENTIFIERS PF Project

ABSTRACT

A description is given of the Descriptive Review Process, a method of analyzing a teacher's personal style in order to promote teacher development and improvement. The process combines teacher self-evaluation with evaluation by an observer and a chairperson. The emphasis of the process is on the teacher. The teacher's role in the process involves: (1) determining the specific focus of the process; (2) reflecting on the teaching practice being observed; (3) receiving feedback in a descriptive, nonjudgmental way; (4) becoming aware of patterns of personal style as they are exhibited in the teaching context; and (5) collaborating with the observer and chairperson in formulating recommendations to utilize the strengths of the personal style. Topics covered in this description include: ways the process has been successful; areas the teacher and the observer should reflect on in preparation for the process; steps involved in the process; and questions for the teacher to comment on during the process. (DC)

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A DESCRIPTIVE REVIEW PROCESS FOR GROWTH IN TEACHING

by Sara Fritzell Hanhan and Wayne Kuklinski

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The primary tool with which teachers work is themselves. In utilizing beliefs, knowledge, and skills in working with children, each teacher's personal style, the manner in which the personality of the teacher is expressed, will distinguish his/her particular impact within the teaching context. The purpose of the presentation is to provide the description of an inservice process for teacher development that emphasizes the teacher's awareness of, support for, and more effective utilization of his/her personal style.

The descriptive review process to be presented was developed by Sara Fritzell Hanhan and Wayne Kuklinski, University of North Dakota, and adapts and extends for teacher development the work of Pat Carini[1] in descriptive documentary processes and formats. In the process, the teacher 1) provides the specific focus or concern of the process, 2) provides his/her own descriptive reflections of practice, 3) receives feedback from observations in a descriptive, non-judgmental way, 4) becomes aware of patterns of personal style exhibited in the teaching context, and 5) collaborates in utilizing the strengths of the personal style to formulate recommendations that support and extend the teacher's effective practice (particularly as related to the initial focus or concern identified by the teacher).

Assuming at least a demonstrated potential of the individual to become an effective teacher, the process has been successful in accomplishing with teachers the following goals:

1) to encourage personal reflection and acceptance of one's personal style as expressed in the teaching context
2) to utilize the strengths of one's personal style for support of current practice and encouragement of increased effectiveness in teaching
3) to encourage increased independence in judging one's own success in achieving desired impact in teaching

In preparation for the Descriptive Review Process, the teacher should reflect on the following:

1) The "presenting question" - What kind of feedback/information do you want the process to address? What particular concern about your teaching do you currently have?

2) The various aspects of her/his teaching experience - a list of questions are provided to assist in reflecting on teaching practice.

3) Her/his perception of greatest strengths and areas of greatest vulnerability.

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[1] Pat Carini is the Director of the Prospect Archive and Center for Education and Research in North Bennington, Vermont.

In preparation for the Process, the observer will reflect on and organize his/her observations of the teacher, for the purpose of describing the teacher in terms of the following:

1) The teacher's stance in the world: gesture, posture, inflection, rhythm, energy.

2) The teacher's emotional tenor and disposition: tone, expressiveness, intensity, range, pattern.

3) The teacher's mode of relationships with the children and other adults: attachments, variation and consistency, quality, range.

4) The teacher's activities and interests: modes of engagement, pattern of involvement, range, intensity.

The teacher, observer and chairperson meet and conduct the Descriptive Review Process as follows:

1) The teacher identifies the "presenting question." (The observer and chairperson, if needed, will assist in the framing/stating of this presenting question. The question will provide the focus for the Review Process and subsequent recommendations to the teacher.)

2) The teacher presents the reflections on her/his teaching practice according to the questions provided. (The teacher is encouraged to answer the questions in an alternative sequence and/or emphasize or omit questions as seems appropriate.)

3) The chairperson provides a summary of the teacher's reflections.

4) The observer presents a description of the teacher.

5) The chairperson provides a summary of the observer's description of the teacher.

6) All participants express and discuss additional input, questions and concerns regarding the evolving description of the teacher.

7) The teacher, assisted by the observer and chairperson, reflect on and discuss what appear to be the teacher's greatest strengths and areas of greatest vulnerability.

8) Recommendations are expressed which build on the teacher's strengths and personal style. These recommendations address problem areas such as inconsistent or ineffective practice which have been identified in the "presenting question" and/or which have become evident in some other part of Review Process.

9) All participants discuss and critique the Review Process.

* During the review process, the teacher will be asked to comment on the following items related to his/her teaching experience:

1. The easy times and hard times of the day and of the week.
   Which times of day and/or which days of the week seem to go the easiest? The hardest for you? Why?

2. Areas in which you feel particular pressure and areas which are particularly self-sustaining and smooth running.
   In which areas of the Center do you feel the most comfort and/or satisfaction? The least comfort and/or satisfaction? Why?

3. Where in the Center do you spend most of your time? How do you spend most of your time? Where are you and what are you doing when you have a choice?

4. What do you view your role as teacher to be? What kind of role do you play in relation to the children?

5. Subjects, themes, activities, interests.
   What themes have you chosen to pursue in your activities with the children? What kinds of projects have you involved them and yourself in? What are your plans for themes and activities?

6. Describe the personality of the group of children with whom you work. Is there a typical focal point for the group -- a particular child, teacher, a topic of interest, etc. -- or is focus more often diffused?

7. How do you get ready for the morning? When and where?

8. What happens to you at the end of the morning? Physically? Mentally? Emotionally?

9. Describe some of the individual children in your group.

10. What are your goals for the semester? For your group of children? For individual children? For yourself?

11. What strategies do you employ in "managing the children"? What "discipline" or "guidance" techniques do you tend to use?

12. When do you feel the most satisfaction from your teacher work? The least?

13. When the routine is upset and/or changing, how do you regain your equilibrium? How do you help the children regain their equilibrium?